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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 1940

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "FILLING THE FLOUR BIN." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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If you've been keeping up with the news on food--you've heard that flour is very much in the limelight. The Food and Drug Administration of the Federal Security Agency is busy these days--working out definitions for different types of flour. That may sound like an easy job. But it's really a very difficult problem, because modern milling methods are complicated. So these standards for flour aren't established yet.

In the meantime I have some information here about selecting flour . . . practical suggestions from the Bureau of Home Economics of the United States Department of Agriculture. It answers some of the questions as to why you need one kind of flour for bread and another kind for cake--how flours differ--the special ways to handle different flours when you're baking.

When the Bureau of Home Economics puts out a recipe, it always tells which kind of flour to use.....hard wheat flour for yeast bread--soft wheat flour for cakes and pastry. And if you want to be sure of good results in your baking--use the kind of flour the recipe calls for.

When you make yeast bread, you want a light loaf that has a smooth, well-rounded top. For that you get the best results with a flour that has plenty of good quality gluten. The hard-wheat flours have the kind of gluten that stretches without breaking, and easily holds enough gas to make the dough "double in bulk."

But when you make cakes and pastry, you're interested in tender texture--not in strong gluten. So it's best to use a soft-wheat flour that has weaker glute

There are special soft-wheat flours just right for making cakes and pastry.

But perhaps you'd rather have just one kind of flour that will do for both bread and cakes. If that's the case, you can get an "all-purpose" or "family" flour--which is a blend of strong and weak flour. You'll find that the all-purpose flour has enough gluten to make yeast bread....and it will also produce fairly tender cakes and quick breads.

Most of the flour you buy is the plain white kind.....that is, it's made from the inner part of the wheat grain--with the germ and most of the bran removed.

But, of course, you can also buy flour that is made from the entire grain. It's sold under various names.....whole-wheat flour--graham flour---entire-wheat flour. When you make this flour into bread--the crumb has a nut brown color, and the loaf is not quite so light as that made from the more common white flour.

This whole-wheat flour is made in modern mills and sold in convenient sacks--just like white flour. Yet, it's much like the original flour made centuries ago--when a flour mill was simply two flat stones that the women could rub together to crack the grain. (Yes, in those days, flour milling was exclusively a woman's job--and the homemaker knew her flours.)

But now let's go back to the practical points that the modern homemaker wants to know about flour. You know how important it is to use exact measurements when you're following a recipe. And, of course, you've noticed that flour is a tricky thing to measure. When the recipe calls for a cup of sifted flour, it's absolutely necessary to have the flour sifted before you measure it. (If the flour is packed down--you may be able to get as much as 1 1/2 cups into a one-cup measure.) After you have the flour sifted--dip it gently into a measuring cup. You'll find that the ideal cup is level on top--so you can run a knife over the top and get an exact measure.

However--there's one exception to the rule of sifting before measuring..... and that is coarse whole-wheat flour. The bran won't go through an ordinary sifter, unless it is ground fine. So you measure whole-wheat flour unsifted.

When you make bread and biscuit dough--you may be puzzled to find that the recipe suggests only an approximate amount of flour. For example, the directions for making biscuits say "enough milk to make a soft dough." Perhaps you've wondered why the recipes aren't more specific. And here's the reason.....hard wheat flours absorb more liquid than soft-wheat flours. So it takes more water or milk to make them into a soft dough.

Remember also that the soft-wheat flours are weak flours. They will not stand as much kneading as the hard-wheat flours. And if you use them in making yeast bread, the dough will not stretch as far as that made from hard-wheat flour. Some states where soft-wheat is grown have worked out special directions for making bread with that kind of flour.

When you make bread from a new lot of flour, it's best to measure the amount of flour you use, and note how it acts. If you get good results--use the same measurements and methods as long as that lot of flour lasts. However, if the flour has been standing long enough to dry out--it may take more liquid to make the same kind of dough.

And that's some of the story behind flour--the essential ingredient in yeast bread, quick breads, cake, cookies, pastries, and all the other good things you bake.

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